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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Memorandum of Conversation

DATE: March 10, 1977

SUBJECT: Human Rights and MDB Support for President Carter

PARTICIPANTS: Mr. Airton Soares, MDB Deputy from Sao Paulo
Mr. Arthur M. Giese, Political Officer, BRASILIA

PLACE: Mr. Soares' Congressional Office

COPIES TO: Amembassy BRASILIA: AMB, DCM, PSS, DAO, ECON, USIS
Amconsuls: RIO DE JANEIRO, SAO PAULO, BELEM, PORTO ALEGRE*
Department of State: ARA/ECA/BR, INR/DDC/OIL,
INR/DDR/RAR, D/HA

After failing to find me at home in the evening of March 9, Soares called March 10 and in guarded tones, refusing to give his name, made clear that he had to see me about recent political developments. In his deserted office and highly nervous, Soares said he was authorized to speak for a group of MDB Deputies and Senators which included such opponents of the regime as MDB Leader Alencar Furtado and Senator Marcos Freire. The group wanted the US to know that it had friends in Brazil and in Congress who appreciated what the Carter administration was doing about human rights. Furthermore, the group wanted to keep in contact with the Americans "in case something happened." Soares suggested informal meetings over lunch or dinner, but not immediately. He noted that the oppositions activities were closely monitored and to appear too close to the Americans was being interpreted as "treason" by the Government.

Soares said that Geisel's popularity had increased tremendously since his opposition to U.S. pressures against the nuclear accord, and the President was wrapping himself in the flag on the human rights issue. The MDB, however, was feeling pressure from its constituency, particularly the students, who were saying that Jimmy Carter was speaking in behalf of suffering Brazilians, but the MDB was not. They were pushing hard for the MDB to attack the Government. Soares sought information about the contents of the human rights report, and seemed satisfied when I emphasized that it was "objective" noting progress as well as problem areas.

Soares said he had heard that Colonel Camargo in his March 9 visit to ARENA Congressional leadership had asked for the leadership to support

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(Drafting Office and Officer)

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indirect elections in 1978 and to modify the Constitution by including the provisions of AI-5, which tends to confirm similar information we have received through other sources.

I told Soares that we wanted to keep contact with the opposition, noting it was entirely normal diplomatic practice for Embassies to have contacts with both the opposition and the party in power. I would be glad to host him and his colleagues at my home whenever he or they would like to come. Soares promised to keep me informed and suggested that I drop by his office every week to follow developments in the course of my contacts in Congress.

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